[Translation]

SHRI K.D. SULTANPURI (Shimla): Mr. Speaker, Sir, due to the recent heavy rains in Himachal Pradesh the road approaches to the initerior villages of my constituency have been cut off. The apple crops are rotting due to the blockage of roads and the people there are suffering great hardship. The Government of the State does not have resources for opening the road. Many people and cattle have died and great damage has been done by the rains. The Government of Himachal Pradesh had demanded an assistance of Rs. 400 crores. Everywhere in the districts of Sirmour, Solan and Simla, there are signs of ravages. The apple crops and vegetables are held up and are not reaching the markets. I request that the Government of India should send a team to Himachal Pradesh to make an assessment of the damage done and provide necessary assistance. The Ministers of Tourism and Parliamentary Affairs are present in the House and they should assure us that something would be done to provide relief to those people.

SHRI BHAKT CHARAN DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we are going to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of 50 years of our independence, in one corner of the country, even ordinary medicines are not available. In my constituency, more than 300 persons have died and more than 1200 are ill. Yesterday's New Delhi Times has carried this news and I had also given a notice in this regard about a week back. However, the matter could not be raised in the din and noise of the House. Today morning I sent a notice to your office giving a list of the people who have died, Blockwise and village-wise. Sir, it is not something new for the people of Kalahandi to die of diseases. People have been dying there ever since 1985. The communication system of 1500 villages gets cut-off. There are small dispensaries situated at distances of 40 kms. and the people cannot reach there for absence of transport. They cannot even go to their offices. We have not been able to provide the facility of doctors in the villages of our country even after 50 years of independence with the result that people die in hundreds like insects even in small ailments. Presently, 1200 to 1500 people are lying ill. The arrangements for medicines are so poor in that area that even preventive medicines are not available to the people. The medicines that are distributed in the Blocks are very insufficient. I therefore, urge the Government to arrange supplies of adequate quantity of medicines and also provide the facility of doctors.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: You have made you point. Shri Sharad Pattanayak has made his point.

[Translation]

SHRI BHAKT CHARAN DAS: Sir, I request the Government to pay proper attention to this.

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY (Chhapra): I want to draw the attention of the Petroleum Minister to a special issue. Bitumen is being supplied to Bihar for the last five years by Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and other Companies. Reports have come from 54 districts of Bihar of a scam to the tune of Rs. 100 to 200 crores in the supply of bitumen through some middlemen of the Government. The supplies are made by the Central Government. Bihar has a population of ten crores ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: It appears we will have to convert this House into Bihar Assembly !

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Sir, this country will have to worry about Bihar. Conditions in Bihar are very bad and this is a big scam that ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: A scam of a magnitude involving crores of rupees ... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: I demand that an enquiry be instituted in this important matter.

SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE (Jabalpur): Mr. Speaker, A committee was constituted by the Labour Department of Madhya Pradesh to consider the problems of *bidi* workers. The Committee submitted its report in December, 1995. It is an all India issue because the *bidi* workers are not confined to Madhya Pradesh, but are spread all over the country. The findings of the Committee are: Tendu leaves are supplied in short quantity, the quality of Tendu leaves in bad, tobacco and thread are not supplied free of cost, wages are not paid in time, records of *bidi* workers are not maintained, *bidi* workers are not given wage slips, there is inadequate representation to workers in expert committees. The committee did not even make an effort to probe into the implementation of the schemes of Provident Fund, Employees State Insurance Scheme, medical facilities and welfare schemes.

I want to request the Government to take proper steps for improving the condition of *bidi* workers.

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH (Vidisha): Mr. Speaker, Sir, even though the Indian markets are flooded with foreign products, there are many Indian commodities which are still popular in foreign countries. Rice, particularly Basmati rice, hods a pride of place. In foreign countries, specially in U.S.A. and U.K., Basmati rice is in great demand. Our exports of rice to foreign companies amount to about Rs. 950 crores. To cash on the popularity of Basmati rice, some foreign companies have started their own production of Indian style Basmati under several names such as Kasmati, Jasmati etc. This has created a piquant situation.